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English 10 H- Block 2

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**About the Book**

The book *Middlesex* by Jeffree Eugenides was published in 2002. It takes place, from the story’s exposition in Europe, but then shifts to, and focuses primarily on Eugenides’ hometown of Detroit. Here, Eugenides cunningly emphasizes the importance of Detroit to him, while demonstrating its significance on teenage life there through the protagonist, Cal(lie). Cal, or Callie, is a young, Greek hermaphrodite whose family comes to America in hopes of leading an average life, while striving to conceal their contentious lifestyle.

**About the Author**

The author of *Middlesex* (A Pulitzer Prize winner, 2003) Jeffrey Eugenides was born in Detroit, Michigan, of Greek and Irish descent. He attended Grosse Pointe's Liggett School. He earned his undergraduate degree at Brown University, and graduated in 1983. He later earned an M.A. in Creative Writing from Stanford University. In 1986, he was honored with the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences Nicholl Fellowship for *Here Comes Winston, Full of the Holy Spirit*, a story. Eugenides is hesitant to disclose details about aspects of his personal life, but does so discreetly through book signings in Michigan. Here, Jeffrey Eugenides expands upon the deep influence from his hometown of Detroit. He has said that he has "a perverse love" of his birthplace. Currently, he resides in Princeton, New Jersey. He has a wife, Karen Yamauchi, with whom he has a daughter, Georgia. He has also written *Baster* (1996), *The Marriage Plot* (2011), and short stories in “The New Yorker”. In the fall of 2007, Eugenides joined the faculty of Princeton’s Program in Creative Writing. He is known as a controversial author that portrays his opinion and purpose in a mysterious manner.

**Character and Conflicts**

The protagonist of *Middlesex* is at first, a young girl named Callie whose destiny it is to become a man to be named Cal. There is an abnormal gene in Cal’s family that subjects its members to forbidden love. Cal’s grandparents Lefty (grandfather) and Desdemona (grandmother) have an insatiable yearn for each other, despite the fact that they are brother and sister. However, incest in Cal’s family is not uncommon, for Desdemona and Lefty’s son Milton falls in hopeless love with his parents’ cousin, Sourmelina. The major conflict in *Middlesex* is that of a taboo sequence of love. However, this conflict is overcome in both instances by the pureness of the love each incestuous relationship is made of. Despite the pattern of incest, Callie, the daughter of Sourmelina and Milton is born a seemingly typical young girl. Until the peak of her teenage years, Callie was looked at as a beautiful girl, that would flourish into an even more beautiful woman. Nevertheless, her family’s fate cast its “curse” on Callie as well. A flaw in sexuality, as seen in her parents and grandparents, led to self-realization, and a coming-of-age for Callie. Her class, ironically, read the Greek tragedy *Antigone*, and Callie was chosen to be the part of Tiresias, an all-knowing, future-seeing prophet. Here, Callie comes to the recognition that her future will hold a change for her, physically and emotionally. From this point on, Callie will live her, now “his” life, as a growing male named Cal.

**Theme:** Jeffrey Eugenides demonstrates through his accepting perspective of a litigious lifestyle, that a person facing trying circumstances should learn self-acceptance.